



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Research,
Education, and
Economics

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

TO: NIFA Partners

FROM: Andrea Brandon
Deputy Administrator
Office of Extramural Programs

SUBJECT: Method of Payment for Awards

Since February 1991, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) has been utilizing the Payment Management System (PMS) operated by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to conduct financial transactions with award recipients. In FY 2009, CSREES began to transition from PMS to the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP) operated by the Department of the Treasury's Financial Management Service to provide improved customer service, greater transparency, and more efficient reconciliations. On October 1, 2009 all CSREES authorities were transferred to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). In FY 2010 NIFA will continue to transition to ASAP.

The FY 2010 NIFA transition is expected to be handled as follows:

- ASAP will be the method of payment for **ALL** Biomass Research Development Initiative Competitive Grants Program.
- For all other programs (i.e., formula, competitive, and non-competitive programs), CSREES will include ASAP as the method of payment in **NEW** awards.
- Continuation awards, renewal awards, and supplemental awards will use the method of payment [Payment Management System] that was included in the initial award.
- There will be an initiative to move the awards with a PMS designation to ASAP. This initiative will not involve awards in their final year (these awards will maintain the PMS designation until closeout of the award). The initiative will be accomplished through a phase-in approach. The phase-in plan will identify awards and when conversion from PMS to ASAP is planned. This plan, once completed, will be made available on the NIFA web site at http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

The web site at http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html will not only contain the phase-in plan but will contain helpful information to get started including guides, manuals, forms, common questions received by ASAP staff (e.g., what should be done if someone forgets their password) and those received by CSREES/NIFA staff (e.g., how long will it take to transfer the money in the PMS account to an ASAP account). Please visit the web site for the useful information.

The method of payment designation is currently located in Block 9., of the official award agreement, Form CSREES-2009.

Further questions may be addressed to Tonya Johnson of the Financial Operations Branch at tjohnson@csrees.usda.gov or (202) 401-4527.